
Abstracts

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Abstracts

Joseph Kuhn “Poor Naked Wretches”: The Wound of the Ordinary in Agee and Warren

The pastoral figure of the small farmer in the writings of the Nashville Agrarians and other southern modernists gave expression to a conservative metaphysics of the soil, one that underpinned the unitary, organic notion of “the South” in the interwar decades. This agrarian figure of the “harvester” was subsequently criticised by two southern radicals, James Agee in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) and Robert Penn Warren in “Blackberry Winter” (1946). Both Agee’s cotton tenants and Warren’s tramp show how any southern poetics of the earth had to take account of the intrusion of economic depression and world war into the region. Agee’s work is particularly incisive and close to the European avant-garde in that he envisages the ruined agricultural families of Alabama through a perspective close to Georges Bataille’s sociology of the sacred and Maurice Blanchot’s theory of the inoperative community.

Keywords: agrarian principles, harvesters, community, J. Agee, R.P. Warren,

Karl Wood At Home in Loneliness, Loneliness at Home: Domesticity and the Early Short Stories of Richard Yates

Richard Yates is best known for his 1961 novel *Revolutionary Road*, which speaks clearly and powerfully to questions of home, escape and ultimate entrapment in the suburban idyll of Eisenhower-era middle-class white America, a bleak examination of an ideal that promised safety, community, and belonging (to those allowed to belong). As fine a novel as *Revolutionary Road* may be, Yates’ short fiction is in ways more compelling and poignant. In pieces that focus on unremarkable, ordinary individuals, it addresses

Agnieszka Łobodziec **Domestication of Foreigner's Home in Toni Morrison's Home**

a considerably broader range of experiences of home, isolation and loneliness in the 1950s in dialog with the postwar hegemonic ideal of white suburban middle-class domesticity. The intent of this paper is to critically examine themes of home and alienation in selections from Yates' short story collection *Eleven Kinds of Loneliness* (1962) – stories written from 1951–1961 and published in various periodicals including *The Atlantic Monthly*, in order to explore the complexity of 1950s American discourse surrounding home and domesticity, perhaps surprisingly from the pen of a mainstream white male author. **Keywords:** domesticity, suburbia, safety, American Dream, R. Yates

In a number of interviews, Toni Morrison refers to America as Foreigners' Home. This conceptualization is linked to the historical processes related to the formation of the New World by immigrants who sought to make America their new homeland. Upon their expropriation of land from native inhabitants, there arose a need for a labor force to work the acquired land that engendered forced chattel African immigration to America out of which grew a particular African-American experience. Enslavement as well as Jim Crow segregation induced within the New World black American community feelings of foreignness, "a long way from home". One of their survival strategies and forms of resistance against oppression was the development of another sense of home over against the oppressive conditions that engulfed them. In her novel *Home*, Toni Morrison reconstructs the journey of a black Korean War veteran, Frank Money, who reaches a sense of homeliness in the racially segregated South despite failing to realize the citizen-soldier ideal and being victim and witness to continued widespread racist oppression. He attains a sense of belonging and security upon returning to the black community of Lotus, Georgia, where black people are regarded as foreign because of their settlement there as forced exiles. The community, by its unity, manages to domesticate this foreigners' home, which enables Frank Money, the traumatized black veteran, to perceive Lotus as an empowering space contrary to the alienation he felt before his engagement in combat abroad. **Keywords:** foreignness, immigration, segregation, J. Crow, T. Morrison

Jerzy Sobieraj **Southern Antebellum Plantation: Home, Prison, Enterprise?**

The article addresses various functions of the *antebellum* Southern plantation. The author covers both major “actors” who experienced the plantation system, planters (and the members of their families) and slaves. In reports written by white Southern writers, including planters and the members of their families (e.g. Thomas Nelson Page, Bennet Barrow) the plantation is introduced, mainly, as a great place, a real home for its inhabitants. For black slaves, as some of them (e.g. Harriet Jacobs, Solomon Northup) noted in their journals, the plantation resembles a prison; the place that appears to a slave as the one “[he/she] can never get out” of (Jacobs). The plantation also functions as a commercial enterprise – often employing torturous methods of production – run by slaveholders who “exhibited a considerable degree of profit consciousness and market responsiveness” (Paquette and Ferleger). The author of the paper discusses Stanley M. Elkins’ conception of the plantation slave system as the concentration camp imprisonment, as well as Eugene Genovese’s interpretation of the plantation as an enterprise.

Keywords: Plantation fiction, Civil War, slavery, S. Northup, H. Jacobs,

Karolina Słotwińska **Domesticating the Flâneur: Colson Whitehead’s Zone One**

The paper analyzes the appearance of the flâneur in Colson Whitehead’s 2011 apocalyptic zombie novel *Zone One*. Although considered an obsolete figure of nineteenth-century literature, the flâneur as conceptualized by Walter Benjamin can be still seen as useful in guiding discussions of contemporary urban experience. The essay argues that the ruined city in *Zone One*, although initially frozen in the aftermath of the shock of zombie apocalypse, is in the course of the novel reconfigured as the space of change owing to the transformation and actualization of flâneurian optics. The novel can thus be seen as outlining a paradoxical process of domestication in which the flâneur changes from an obsessed outsider into a “man of the crowd” that belongs in the city streets and among its masses. This transformation is visible at the level of the plot and the narrative style in the shift from predominantly phantasmatic treatment of metropolis echoing modernist literature to the action-driven narrative of a zombie novel emphasizing active involvement in the change. Through its engagement with the theme of a ruined city and its location in Manhattan, *Zone One* aligns itself with other

Joanna Stolarek
***Alienation and
 Dislocation versus
 Homeliness and
 Norm in Patricia
 Highsmith's
 Strangers
 on a Train
 and The Talented
 Mr Ripley***

literary works dealing with the trauma of 9/11 and provides an alternative to the disjointed inas-similable spectacle of the catastrophe in the form of ethically focused writing, which attempts to map out the trajectory for communal witnessing. **Keywords:** flaneur, zombie, witnessing, metropolis, C. Whitehead

The aim of this article is to scrutinise the problem of alienation and dislocation in the context of homeliness and norm in the United States after World War II in Patricia Highsmith's (1921–1955) *Strangers on a Train* and *The Talented Mr Ripley*. The author examines normality and oddity with respect to the main characters' home environment and their relations with other protagonists. The emphasis is placed on the analysis of Charles Anthony Bruno from *Strangers on a Train* (1950) and Tom Ripley from *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955), psychopaths and killers, depicted as un-fulfilled artists, marginalized by their community, mostly due to their homosexual inclinations and extravagant behaviour. The author of the article is going to show how Highsmith's protagonists, being homosexuals and strangers, are exposed to the suspicious examination of an orthodox society that hounds them. As a lesbian, the writer was imbued with a feeling of social non-conformity and her status as an American living in Europe also marginalized her, making her as much of an outsider in her chosen home as she had been in her country of birth (Fort Worth, Texas). The author of this article is going to prove how Patricia Highsmith's living in deeply conservative American society affected her depiction of fictional homes and the creation of the characters who operate outside the norm and live on the fringe of society.

Keywords: P. Highsmith, *Strangers on a Train*, *The Talented Mr Ripley*, home, alienation, dislocation

**Evangelia
 Kyriakidou**
***The Secret History
 of Hamden Campus:
 A Study in Elitism
 and Murder***

This paper examines Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* (1992) from the perspective of campus spatial modalities and their use or abuse by a privileged group of students. As in other campus mystery novels, the supposedly egalitarian and democratic space of the campus is transformed into an elitist enclave by a group of students who use knowledge-as-power in order to plot the murder of threatening intruders

Priyanka Deshmukh
**Out of the Ordinary:
 The Event
 and Its Repetition
 in Paul Auster's
 Prose**

into their exclusive world. The unexpected turn of events brings about the disenchantment of Richard Papen, a low-class but talented, young Californian who enrolls to Hamden, Vermont with high academic expectations. At the same time as it introduces a series of personal disillusionments it also creates a crisis of meaning in the American campus in general.

Keywords: campus novel, elitism, egalitarianism, idyll, D. Tartt

Devoid of metaphors, conventional in its syntax, and resolute in its ordinariness, Paul Auster's prose is centered around nothing less than the extraordinary. However, the extraordinary in his narratives—which often takes the form of unexpected, chance events—originates and remains rooted in the mundane, the routine, the domestic, the trivial. The ordinary, in his writing, is the condition of possibility for the extraordinary, and in so doing, calls into question this very dichotomy. This paper attempts to examine what happens when this inversion of categories repeats itself within a narrative, and throughout Auster's work.

Keywords: repetition, theory of communication, ordinariness, domesticity, P. Auster

Aristi Trendel
**Exile in Julia
 Alvarez's
 How the Garcia Girls
 Lost Their Accents**

Exile in Julia Alvarez's novel, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* is polymorphous and incremental. It involves politics, culture, race, gender, ethics, ontology and language. If homelessness haunts the narrative, homesickness is equally poignant and is not cured by the return of the native. Exile forges nomadic consciousness in the narrative. This paper inquires into the multiple facets of exile linked with what Alvarez's main character refers to as "a violation in the centre of her art." Edward Said, Barbara Cassin, and Ronald Laing provide the theoretical framework of the paper.

Keywords:

Paulina Ambroży
**"It ghosts": Language
 as a Haunted
 Dwelling
 in Selected Poems
 by Robert Frost,
 Wallace Stevens
 and Marianne Moore**

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida argues that all writing is ghost-driven, for "everyone reads, acts, writes with his or her ghosts." Modernist poetry can be described as particularly "spectral", as it often locates itself on the threshold between the presentable and the unrepresentable, between the body and the spirit, thus creating the right dwelling – or the right "body" – for the haunting traces, apparitions, and reappearitions of the past. Using Derrida's concept of literature as the specter and Martin Heidegger's notion of "poetical dwelling", I shall examine selected poems by Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, and Marianne Moore as the spaces and bodies which are both haunted and haunting. To explain the nature of spectral language and modern hauntology, Derrida uses Marx's formulation "Es spukt" [it ghosts], which, as I shall attempt to prove, aptly captures the uncanny apparitioning of metaphysical truths in the works of the above poets. Robert Frost's "Ghost House", Stevens's "The Curtains in the House of the Metaphysician", Marianne Moore's "To a Chameleon", among other poems, will serve me as instances of spectral poetics in which spiritual and epistemological doubts of the era assume quasi-transcendental forms and shapes, suspending the reader between the impossibility of truth and its revelation.

Keywords: haunting, specter, quasi-transcendence, R. Frost, W. Stevens, M. Moore

*Agnieszka
 Pantuchowicz*
**"Why Am I Cold."
 Sylvia Plath's
 English Home
 and the American
 Refrigerators**

The paper addresses the theme of coldness in Sylvia Plath's poetry and other writings as a significant element of the construction of imaginary domestic spaces and their linkage to the reminiscences of her American home and the experience of life in England. English homes, which she finds to be "cool enough to keep butter and milk in," are transformed in her poems into a natural living space of what she calls hibernaculum. What she expresses in her letters and in her *Journal*, however, is a wish to have an American size refrigerator, a domestic device whose ambivalent role complicates and defamiliarizes the senses with which she endows places and objects of everyday life.

Keywords: S. Plath, everyday life, domesticity, coldness, refrigerators

Anna Warso **Other Presences: Elizabeth Bishop's Poetics of Hospitality**

A stranger in Brazil, where she found home for 15 years, Bishop is known for her attentive depictions of landscapes, objects and animals. The article looks at the presences of others in her writing and postulates the possibility of an ethical impulse behind the restraint of Bishop's poetic voice, her fondness of correspondence and her insistence on the importance of *goodness*. The inevitability of appropriation inherent in the acts of representation (or translation into language), countered by Bishop's reticence, is viewed as gesture of hospitality, on whose challenges and/or impossibility Jacques Derrida commented in the 1996 seminars.

Keywords: hospitality, ethics, letter writing, homelessness, E. Bishop, R. Lowell

Małgorzata Myk **Tracing the Form of Compassion: Homelessness in Leslie Scalapino's "bum series"**

The article examines American avant-garde poet Leslie Scalapino's poem "bum series," included in 1988 collection *way*. Devoted to the theme of homelessness, "bum series" problematizes a poetic gesture of forging an ethical response to suffering, focusing on scrutiny rather than representation. I offer a reading of the poem alongside François Laruelle's non-standard philosophical reflection, presented in his 2015 *General Theory of Victims*, according to which the ethical role of the intellectual needs to be rethought beyond the impulse to speak for the other, or to represent the other's suffering. I trace similarities and differences between Laruelle's and Scalapino's positions. Whereas Laruelle's abstract critique re-emphasizes "overexposure" that turns suffering into an image used by the media-savvy intellectuals, Scalapino's poetic writing moves towards a nuanced investigation of the ways in which our perception of suffering is formed. Scalapino's sense of ethics entails recognition of one's implication in mechanisms of representation, emphasizing one's accountability for one's actions as well as conceptualizations. I also identify a speculative trajectory that informs Scalapino's neo-objectivist experimentation with the non-hierarchical form of writing.

Keywords: homelessness, suffering, representation, derealization, L. Scalapino